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ABSTRACT

A new debate strategy which may be used in judging academic debates is the application of policy systems analysis. In the policy systems analysis approach, the negative team must advocate a policy system just as the affirmative team does, providing a comparison for the debate judge. The major difference between systems analysis and traditional debate analysis is the role played by the judge--either policy chooser or hypothesis tester--whose decision related to the issues of presumption, inherency, and significance must be influenced by the underlying tenets of policy systems analysis. Thus, the decision is based on more than the traditional stock issues which lead to either acceptance or rejection of the resolution. This approach, still an innovation, needs more research, more thought, more use, and more exchange at conventions and in journals. (JM)

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THE SWING TO SYSTEMS ANALYSIS:

A REVOLUTION IN DEBATE JUDGING STANDARDS?

by

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THE SWING TO SYSTEMS ANALYSIS: A REVOLUTION IN DEBATE JUDGING STANDARDS?

Joe McAdoo introduced his anthology of essays, Judging Debate, with this statement:

> Many fine textbooks have been written which clearly state the rules of argumentation debaters should use. Such vital terms as prima-facie case, inherency, presumption, and the rules for use of evidence have been clearly emphasized in numerous textbooks. Enough writers have reached agreements as to what is expected of affirmative and negative teams that there should be little doubt about what constitutes acceptable debate strategy.[1]

This paper will focus on a new debate strategy which plants a seed of doubt in all this apparent concensus. Specifically, the application of policy systems analysis to academic debating produces decision rules at considerable variance from the rules previously used to determine the winner by the "stock issues" school of judging. The appearance of Brock, et. al.'s Public Policy Decision-Making: Systems Analysis and Comparative Advantages Debate in 1973 marked a significant departure from the traditional wisdom; and J. Robert Cox's content analysis of the 1974 NDT Booklet of Judges revealed that half of the judges in that opinion leadership group claim to subscribe to it.[2] Of these innovators, Cox found that the majority had from one to five years of coaching experience and tended to be located in the Northeastern and Western sections of the United States.[3]

At the time I proposed the topic of this convention paper,

I anticipated much more development of policy systems analysis during the course of the debate tournament season than has actually occurred. In point of fact, I have observed very little use being made of the concepts of policy systems analysis by debate teams at the tournaments I have attended. Informal conversations with debaters and coaches who have traveled extensively indicates that they also have not noticed its use on any significant scale. As far as any difference made by policy systems analysis on current debate practice is concerned, I probably should have selected "evolution" rather than "revolution" as the title for this paper.

In principle, however, some of the implications of systems analysis for determining policy are indeed radical when compared with the standards currently imposed upon affirmative cases in academic debate. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to point out selected features of policy systems analysis and to explain how these features depart from more traditional forms of analysis. As these differences hold important ramifications for evaluating policy proposals, to accept them in academic debate would require several revisions in the criteria used for judging debates. In my opinion, "revolutionary" is not too strong an adjective to describe the judging criteria which would follow from the use of policy systems analysis in academic debate.

I. The Frame of Reference

To begin with, let me clarify what I mean by the term, "policy systems analysis." I hope my interpretation will be regarded as a moderate one. As a starting point, turn to the Rand Corporation, the famous "think tank" that conducts policy studies for the government. E.S. Quade, a Rand official, wrote the following definition:

> Systems analysis is a systematic approach to helping a decision-maker choose a course of action by investigating his full problem, searching out alternatives, and comparing them in the light of their consequences, using an appropriate framework--insofar as possible analytic--to bring expert judgment to bear on the problem. . . . In addition, policy analysis places more emphasis on implementation and political and organizational consideration.[4]

A close reading of this definition reveals that it is very closely related to the problem-solving organizational pattern drawn from John Dewey's How We Think, with an additional emphasis added to bring in the special problems of political and organizational considerations. In order to illustrate the close similarity between Quade's definition of systems analysis and the Dewey problem-solving pattern, look at Figure 1. This pattern of organizing and analyzing materials is, of course, especially relevant to group discussion methods.

(See Figure 1 on next page)

As applied to academic debate analysis, policy systems analysis goes beyond group discussion methods. The object of

Figure 1. Dewey and Quade Compared[5]

Dewey	Quade
Step 1. Identify the Problem. State the goal and describe the shortcomings of the present system in achieving the goal.	Investigate the full problem. . . .
Step 2. Analyze the Problem. Analyze the barriers to achieving the goal.	
Step 3. Suggest All Possible Solutions. Brainstorm. Figure out ways to overcome or circumvent the barriers to goal achievement.	Search out alternatives. . .
Step 4. Select the Best Solution. Compare the alternatives, and seek to gain consensus as to the best one.	Compare them in light of their consequences, using an appropriate framework.
Step 5. Implement the Solution.	Policy analysis places more emphasis on implementation and political and organizational considerations.

a policy systems analysis is to recommend a specific policy. It is used for advocacy of one policy as opposed to alternative policies. In this purpose, systems analysis is similar to stock issues analysis. However, generally speaking, stock issues analysis seeks to evaluate whether a stated policy resolution ought to be affirmed or negated; whereas systems analysis seeks to evaluate which policy system among the available alternative systems ought to be selected. This distinction leads to several critical differences in the way a debate must be judged.

How does systems analysis in debate differ from traditional approaches? There are several important differences, but for the purpose of this paper, I will simplify the point and focus on only one.

Traditional approaches, including both the need-plan and the comparative advantage case, use a limited, special application of the problem-solution construct. The affirmative claims that a situation is harmful or inadequate in terms of cost, speed, or efficiency; and that adoption of the resolution will change the situation to remedy the harm or improve things significantly. In order to evaluate this problem-solution construct, judges have traditionally required the affirmative to prove a set of stock issues: is there a need or reason to change, is the

proposal necessary and sufficient to bring about the change, and is the proposal more advantageous than disadvantageous?[6]

Based upon the traditional stock issues, the judge is ultimately concerned with accepting or rejecting the resolution. This approach, sometimes called the hypothesis testing approach, permits a decision against the affirmative team if any one of the stock issues is lost. As one debate judge put it, "It is the belief of this writer that a negative team can justifiably win a debate based on the affirmative team's lack of merit. If an affirmative team does not fulfill its burden of establishing a need for change, then the negative wins by default."[7]

Systems analysis, on the other hand, is not limited to this particular problem-solution construct. Instead, its primary concern is the relative appropriateness of alternative policies which might be used in the process of achieving certain specified goals. Various ways may be employed to achieve a particular effect, and some ways are better than others. It is the business of the policy systems analyst to investigate the alternatives and make comparisons between them. Quade wrote of the policy analysis techniques used by the Rand Corporation:

> The purpose of policy analysis is to help someone choose a course of action; therefore it follows that the analyst should devote a considerable effort to uncovering the set of possible actions, or alternatives, that offer some hope of accomplishing what is wanted. . . . It is the examination of the alternatives and the listing of their characteristics and the consequences that result from their choice that give a basis for comparison.[8]

A basis tenet of the policy systems analysis approach in debate is that the negative team must advocate a policy system just as the affirmative team does, so that a comparison may be made between them by the debate judge. The debate judge is seen as a chooser of policy options. James F. Klumpp, one of the more articulate proponents of systems analysis, described the policy comparison this way:

> From the policy option perspective the affirmative argues that a specific policy option, the affirmative plan, ought to be adopted as governmental policy. . . . The negative, on the other hand, argues that the affirmative policy option ought to be rejected in favor of an alternative policy. The negative policy option may involve the present. . . policy, or an alternative policy different from the present system. . . . The key is, of course, that the negative position is evaluated as an alternative to the affirmative policy option.[9]

Therefore, one main distinction to be drawn between the two constructs is in the burden placed upon the negative team. Under the traditional formats, the affirmative has to prove a prima facie case, or the negative wins. Under the systems analysis approach, the negative must also present a coherent policy system as an alternative option for the judge to weigh against the affirmative case. Allan J. Lichtman and Daniel M. Rohrer explained the implication of this requirement for the negative team:

> Negative teams cannot merely adopt the position sometimes known as "straight refutation"--a simple denial of arguments raised by the affirmative team. In order for comparison to take place it must defend one or more alternatives to

> the policy system advocated by the affirmative. A judge cannot decide whether or not to adopt a given policy system without knowledge of other systems.[10]

This distinction between judging roles--hypothesis tester or policy chooser, and their differing expectations of negative argumentation--has ramifications for determining the voting issues in the debate; and it is to three of those areas we turn our attention next. In fact, these three voting issues compose what appear to me to be the major revolutionary innovations called for by policy systems analysis in debate judging.

II. The Voting Issues

A. Presumption. The problem-solution construct has traditionally been accompanied by a conventional decision rule which awards the presumption to the team which supports the status quo, or at least the side that opposes the resolution for change. This rule has been explained in a variety of ways: the status quo is presumed to be adequate until the burden to prove a prima facie case is established for changing it; or it is a way to decide a tied debate; or it is based on the legal presumption in favor of the accused in a courtroom trial.

All of these reasons for holding presumption away from the affirmative side have been challenged by proponents of policy systems analysis. Lichtman and Rohrer raise several

situations where neither team is entitled to a presumption. For instance, where the resolution is for an inescapable policy decision to deal with a new problem (such as the rise of atomic power or the space age), neither side is entitled to presumption automatically. In a real-life analogy, where does presumption lie for a college senior about to graduate? Change is inevitable because it is forced upon him; there is no presumption for remaining an undergraduate. The choice of the exact nature of change is the issue to be determined. Parents may tell him to get a job, professors may urge him to go to graduate school, and a friend may invite him to tour Europe for a year as a vagabond. None of these advocates is automatically entitled to a presumption in favor of his proposal. There is a similar problem in assigning presumption in other situations: where both sides call for discontinuation of some policy as a result of mutually exclusive choices (guns or butter), and/or where both sides urge change (the counterplan negative.)[11]

At the fundamental level, systems analysis assumes that change is inevitable in any case, regardless of the proposal implicit in a given resolution. From this perspective, the debate judge errs when he awards presumption to the negative side on the basis that the status quo is adequate until a prima facie case is proved against it, because the status quo is not static.

The issue is not, "Should we change the status quo?" but rather, "What should be the policy to guide inevitable change?" Brock and his associates wrote:

> Clearly, the traditional assumption that man can choose to change or leave things as they are is no longer the foundation for problem-solving. Conditions will be changed inadvertently if man doesn't change them intentionally. Today, the decision-maker is using policy to guide change, encouraging some changes and discouraging others.[12]

How does this affect debate judging rules? Very simply, under the systems analysis approach, judges may not appeal to presumption as the sole basis for rejecting an affirmative proposal. To many traditionalists, this represents a revolution in debate judging criteria.

B. Inherency. The most central precept of the problem-solution approach is inherency. If a problem is not inherent in the present policy, it does not support the adoption of the proposed affirmative plan, since it is either capable of solution by measures other than the resolution, or it is incapable of solution by the affirmative plan due to other causes of the problem. The central idea of inherency is causality, as Charles W. LaGrave concluded in an article based upon his Master's thesis on the subject: "Under inherency analysis the exact cause has to be determined, otherwise there will be no guarantee that the affirmative plan will take care of the problem," and, "this condition will continue to exist no matter

what changes are made excluding the adoption of the affirmative plan."[13]

In traditional debate analysis, judges have typically translated this demand for logical rigor to mean identifying a single cause producing a single effect in an airtight, seamless weld. Such a high standard of proving an inherent causal link has resulted in the outright rejection of comparative advantages (or disadvantages) which could not be proven as "unique" to the affirmative plan. It has also generated some farfetched assertions of causal relationships, such as "residential building codes cause most of the unemployment among blacks," "suburban developments cause millions to starve in the third world," and similar mental gymnastics.

Systems analysis goes beyond single-cause inherency. The logical emphasis of systems analysis is placed upon multi-causality. Klumpp stated,

> The assumption of multiple causation rejects belief that one factor may be properly isolated as the cause of another. Instead, a number of conditions, all occurring simultaneously contribute to a complex causal relationship.. . . To summarize the effect of systems analysis on the causal argument we can conclude that it encourages much more argument beyond the immediate causal complex. The single dominant causal argument is replaced by the many factors in causality, suggesting many alternative / policies/, with many effects.[14]

There are two senses in which multicausality influences policy decision making. The first is where several different factors accumulate to lead to a policy decision. Permit a

personal example: What caused me to decide to leave Concordia College two years ago to take my present position at Auburn University? Was it the warmer climate, the shorter debate trips, the closer proximity to my wife's family? Was it the chance to teach graduate students? Was it a slightly higher salary? None of these considered singly seem important enough to have caused me to move; but taken together, apparently they were.

In the other sense, probably more germane to systems theory, multicausality refers to the mutual interdependence among all the components which make up a system. To change a component, or to change an interaction between two components, or to change an input into the system, will set up an inevitable series of changes throughout the system. Maruyama wrote that feedback loops within a system generate "mutual causal systems, i.e., the elements within a system influence each other simultaneously. . ." Moreover,

> Mutual causal relationships may be defined between more than two elements. . . . In a loop, therefore, each element has an influence on all other elements either directly or indirectly, and each element influences itself through other elements. There is no hierarchical causal priority in any of the elements. It is in this sense that we understand the mutual causal relationships."[15]

A simple example of multicausality in the mutual causal relationship sense is evident in the criminal justice system of police, courts, and prisons. An increase in the number of

arrests might have a beneficial effect on the level of crime, or it might not; one must consider the mutual interactions that would be changed in the already overcrowded courts and also in the correctional system if the number of offenders channeled into the system were to be significantly increased.[16]

Another example of the point is furnished by a conference on argumentation held at TCU in 1973. The issue of inherency was well illustrated by an exchange over the systems analysis approach. Ralph Towne proposed a method for applying systems analysis to the medical care topic. According to his example, an affirmative case could be built on the premise that the medical care delivery system is meeting its stated goals less completely than it could because of maladjustments in medical care costs and the availability of doctors. Proposals aimed at solving either problem typically result in exacerbating the other. Therefore, a comprehensive system to collect and analyze health care data, evaluate it in terms of overall goals, and adjust the system accordingly, would be ample warrant for the resolution. In response to this example, Rita Rice Flaningam said, "If we consider a system that may be altered in overall policy impact by manipulation of its internal characteristics, then our problem solution <u>may not arise from an inherent problem</u>."[17] Exactly. Systems analysis does not claim to prove inherency

in the traditional single cause, linear sense, because by definition, a system entails multiple causation and multiple effects. Multiple mutual causality is inherent within a system; but it is complex and produces both costs and benefits, directly and indirectly. All should be of interest to the policy chooser.

As with presumption, judges must view inherency in a new light when operating within the systems analysis framework. For many traditionally oriented judges, to be asked to attach reduced importance to the linear, single cause idea of inherency is a revolutionary concept.

C. Significance. This final voting issue is probably the least controversial. The systems analyst must ultimately offer a significant reason for favoring one alternative over other alternatives. This is no different from the requirement to produce a compelling need in a classical need-plan case, or to produce significant advantages in a comparative advantages case. In fact, we are all very familiar with the routine demands by negative teams for affirmative teams to "quantify" their advantages, i.e., to count the number of "dead bodies on the flow."

The distinctive contribution of systems analysis to determining significance rests in the use of cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness ratios as methods for evaluating alternative policies. Again, Quade described the practices used by the

policy analysts at the Rand Corporation:

> Systems analysis has used two principal conceptual approaches to rank the alternatives. . . . The first is to fix the task or the level of effectiveness, and then seek to determine the alternative which is likely to achieve this level of effectiveness or accomplish the task at the lowest cost. The second approach is that of a fixed budget. For a specified cost level or budget to be used in the attainment of the given objective, the analyst attempts to determine which alternative will produce the highest effectiveness.[18]

In the traditional comparative advantages approach, the affirmative team is expected to demonstrate that its advantages represent significant gains over the operation of the present system, and also that the claimed advantages are more significant than the disadvantages created by adoption of the plan. Both these forms of comparison are ratios, the same ratios used in cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analyses. However, the systems analysis approach adds the requirement that both teams must submit alternative policies for the judge's consideration. The voting issue then becomes: Which side's alternative policy produces the most favorable ratios? The fact that an alternative probably creates disadvantages (costs) is less salient to the debate judge than the "bottom line" of both side's comparative ratios. Once the judge accepts the notion that the negative team is responsible for advocating and defending a system just as the affirmative team is, these two approaches to measuring

the relative desirability of the two alternatives are as intelligent as any.

Systems analysis does not claim merely to demonstrate significant advantages to a particular policy change. What it claims is the probability of finding the greatest cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness ratio so that the best system may be implemented.

III. Conclusion

This paper has pointed to one major difference between systems analysis and traditional debate analysis as being the role played by the judge--either policy chooser or hypothesis tester--and to the ramifications of that distinction upon three voting issues in a debate. I have directed attention to the issues of presumption, inherency, and significance, and I have tried to make clear that the judge's decision related to those issues must be influenced by the underlying tenets of policy systems analysis. I believe there is considerable merit in systems analysis as a tool for academic debate. Where both teams are responsible for advocating a position in the debate, the evaluative formula on the bottom of the AFA ballot makes more sense ("In my opinion, the better debating was done by the _____"). Like many other judges, I have felt uncomfortable awarding a decision to the negative on the basis

of an "affirmative default," or possibly a single stock issue stumbled upon by an otherwise inept negative team. The Sedalia Conference suggested that we consider changes in judging behavior to improve the educational quality of forensics.[19] The swing to systems analysis might be a step in that direction.

Having said this, I would also like to add two qualifications. First, judges should not impose systems analysis decision rules on debaters who do not expect or accept them. If both teams are using a stock issues framework, the judge should oblige them and attempt to decide the issues as they are put to him by the debaters. Second, systems analysis in debate is still an innovation; it is not yet a fully developed approach. There must be more research, more thought, more exchanges at conventions and in our journals, and more use made of the concepts of systems analysis in debate tournaments, before any of us can be completely satisfied with it in our educational debate programs, or with our standards of judging debates which feature them.

FOOTNOTES

1 Springfield, Mo: Mid-America Research, 1975, pp. 11-12.

2 J. Robert Cox, "A Study of Judging Philosophies of the Participants of the National Debate Tournament," JAFA, XI (Fall 1974), p. 62.

3 Ibid., p. 64.

4 E.S. Quade, Analysis for Public Decisions (New York: American Elvesier, 1975), pp. 21-22.

5 This interpretation of Dewey follows that of William S. Smith, Group Problem-Solving Through Discussion (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 34.

6 The stock issues are surely familiar enough to this audience to eliminate the need for listing the standard references here. There are many ways of phrasing the issues, but essentially they question the logical proof of the case in the areas mentioned.

Judges sometimes base their decisions on other factors. For example, affirmative teams might lose because the judge determines the case to be extratopical. Either team may lose because the judge penalizes unethical or discourteous behavior. Persuasive presentation is the basis for some judges' decisions. These sorts of decisions are also well accepted; but for the purpose of this paper, I do not wish to consider them as stock issues. Decisions based on topicality, debater's behavior, or debater's performance skills are made without regard to the form of analysis used by the affirmative team.

7 Charles De Barry, "Essay VI," in Joe McAdoo, Op. cit., p. 75.

8 Quade, Op. cit., pp. 116, 121.

9 "Debate as a Paradigm for Comparing Alternative Policy Options," Paper presented to the SCA convention, Chicago, Ill., December, 1974, p. 4. Emphasis added.

10 "A General Theory of the Counterplan," in Advanced Debate: Readings in Theory, Practice, and Teaching, ed. David A. Thomas (Skokie, Il.: National Textbook Company, 1975), p. 171.

11 "A Systems Approach to Presumption and Burden of Proof," in Thomas, Op. cit., pp. 8-10.

12 Brock, Op. cit., p. 10. In this regard, Kenneth Newton made a useful observation that negative teams should think in terms of a present system, rather than the status quo. "Defending the Present System as System," Paper presented to the SCA convention, December, 1974. Reprinted in Issues, 8 (March 1975), pp. 4-5, 12.

13 "Inherency: An Historical View," in Thomas, Op. cit., pp. 49, 53.

14 Klumpp, Op. cit., pp. 2, 5.

15 Magorah Maruyama, "The Second Cybernetics: Deviation-Amplifying Mutual Causation Processes," in Walter Buckley (ed.), Modern Systems Research for the Behavioral Scientist (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 304, 311-312.

16 I have written a policy systems analysis of the criminal justice system for high school debaters. It is now in press, and it will appear in the May, 1976, Debate Issues. A far more comprehensive (and authoritative) analysis of the criminal justice system utilizing systems analysis is that found in the textbook by Neil C. Chamelin, Vernon B. Fox, and Paul M. Wisenand, Introduction to Criminal Justice (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975).

17

In James I. Luck, Proceedings of the National Conference on Argumentation (Ft. Worth: TCU Academic Related Centennial Observances Committee, August 4-5, 1973), pp. 14-24. Emphasis added.

18

Quade, Op. cit., p. 58.

19

James McBath (ed.) Forensics as Communication: The Argumentative Perspective (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Company, 1975), p. 36.